

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

January 14, 2004
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Schiring, Vice-Chair Lynde, Commissioners Bach, Bonincontri, Mathews, Robertson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Maggi

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Burgess, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kevin McDonald, Kris Liljeblad, Department of Transportation; Art Sullivan, ARCH

GUEST SPEAKERS: Dave Elliot, Chair, Transportation Commission

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Schiring who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Mathews, who arrived at 7:01 p.m.; Commissioner Lynde, who arrived at 7:03 p.m.; and Commissioner Maggi, who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Kathleen Burgess, Planning Manager, said the City Council at its January 5 meeting reviewed the Comprehensive Plan update work program. With regard to studying tree retention citywide, the Council concluded on a 3-3 vote to allow the Bridle Trails study to continue and not to include the citywide item in the work program. With regard to redefining the Community Business (CB) and Neighborhood Business (NB) designations and vision to better serve the needs of nearby residents, the Council concluded that the studies under way should continue; the Council did not include the issue in the work program. The Council also concluded that identification and retention of view corridors should not be included in the work program because it would be resource intensive.

Continuing, Ms. Burgess said the Council considered adding Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas in the shorelines for Lake Sammamish and Lake Washington into the Critical Areas update and concluded that it should be included. She said the issue was not previously reviewed by the Planning Commission because during the CAC deliberations the deadline for the Shoreline Master Program lagged critical areas by just a few months. The

deadline has been extended to 2009, and the Council felt that waiting that long would not be prudent.

The Council decided to work toward adoption of the Downtown Subarea Plan in 2004 to coordinate with the Downtown Transportation Plan. In addition, surgical Land Use Code Amendments necessary to bring the Code into conformance with the Subarea Plan amendments will be made. In 2005 the Downtown Chapter of the Land Use Code is slated for a major overhaul.

Ms. Burgess said a recent court decision with regard to concurrency did not go the way the city thought it would. The Council will at a future meeting provide direction with regard to that subject.

The proposal to revisit the electrical utility section of the Utilities Element was rejected by the Council. The Council concluded that reconfiguration of the 110th Place SE to permit access from the south rather than from Main Street should be included for consideration as part of the Downtown Subarea Plan work.

At the request of the West Bellevue Community Club, the Council agreed to initiate a Land Use Code Amendment to expand the notification area from 200 feet to 300 feet. The issue will not be part of the Comprehensive Plan update process.

Commissioner Bonincontri said the Council asked for more frequent updates from the Planning Commission.

Ms. Burgess reported that the Council also acted to appoint Tobi Maggi to serve as Commissioner in the seat vacated by Councilmember Chelminiak. The Council also appointed Vicki Orrico to fill the seat that will be vacated in June when Chair Schiring leaves the Commission.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. 2004 Update to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code

Before discussing the Downtown transportation policies and projects, Kevin McDonald, Senior Planner, Department of Transportation, informed the Commissioners that a questionnaire has been sent out to some 2600 residences and businesses to initiate the Factoria Area Transportation Study Update. A copy of the mailing was provided to the Commissioners who were encouraged to fill it out as well. Commissioner Robertson has agreed to serve as Planning Commission liaison to the process; for the Transportation Commission the liaison will be Commissioner Matthew.

Mr. McDonald provided the Commissioners with an updated Downtown Transportation Plan project list. He explained that the projects and policies emanate from the effort to update the Downtown Implementation Plan (DIP). The DIP Citizens Advisory Committee completed its work and submitted its final report in June 2003. The draft Downtown Transportation Plan – including a package of policies and projects - was submitted to and reviewed by the

Transportation Commission in December 2003.

Mr. McDonald said policies TR-53, TR-62 and TR-11 apply citywide and not just to the Downtown. The policies deal with improved transit stop facilities, dedicated bus/turn-only lanes, sidewalk widening and pedestrian enhancements, and transportation demand management. The three policies are existing but are proposed for amendment per the recommendation of the CAC.

Chair Schiring asked about the mobility targets, which Mr. McDonald explained are part of the Transportation Element. During the process of updating the element the previously approved mobility targets will be incorporated. He said the efforts by the city, the transit providers, and the Bellevue Downtown Association have been successful with regard to meeting the modesplit targets. Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, allowed that the 40 percent non-SOV target for the Downtown area has not been attained; the target was within reach just prior to the current economic downturn. The targets for some other areas have been achieved, and for those areas the Transportation Commission has proposed raising the targets limits.

Commissioner Bach asked how employers are being encouraged to permit employees to use flexible work hours and alternative forms of transportation. Mr. McDonald allowed that economic incentives represent one major tool used. In many cases employers charge employees for parking; some employers offer free parking to carpools, some offer free bus passes, and still others offer a payment to employees who bike to work.

Mr. Liljeblad agreed that it is difficult to require employers to offer incentives for their employees. The parking supply in the Downtown is not publicly owned and therefore is not publicly controlled. Most of the tools the city has to use are associated with the Commute Trip Reduction program. The transportation demand management programs lean more toward the carrot than the stick; in most cases employers who fail to comply are given nothing more than a written notice. For the most part, however, employers are generally very public spirited and offer packages tailored to the needs of their employees. The biggest challenges in encouraging participation have been with the smaller employers.

Mr. McDonald said there are three new policies proposed which relate to transit. Policy A encourages transit service providers to improve connections between the Downtown and the city's neighborhoods. Policy B directs the city to work with the transit service providers to expand their services with express routes to the Downtown from the region as a whole. Policy C encourages transit service between the Downtown and other designated urban centers.

Proposed new Policy D directs the city to explore the feasibility of providing a transit circulator service between the major employment and retail centers in the Downtown and the activity areas on the fringe of the Downtown, specifically Overlake Hospital.

Commissioner Lynde said she would like to see educational facilities added to the list. Mr. McDonald said educational facilities appear in the more comprehensive approach to transit that will be presented to the Commission on February 11.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Robertson, Mr. McDonald noted that the notion of a ride-free zone in Downtown Bellevue has been discussed. Mr. Liljeblad added that the idea was initially identified as an interim step toward having a circulator service. King County Metro is still considering the idea and there are some challenges to overcome.

Commissioner Mathews asked if there is any proposal within the larger transportation plan for a

circulator to connect the Overlake and Eastgate areas with the Downtown. Mr. McDonald said no specific circulator route is proposed for that route. He added that the larger community wide transportation transit effort does highlight those neighborhood-to-neighborhood connections as well as the neighborhood-to-Downtown connections.

Mr. McDonald explained that proposed Policy E directs improved coordination with the transit service providers to enhance the information and incentives available to current and potential transit riders to facilitate transit usage.

Existing Policy 12 addresses the need to accommodate short-term parking needs in the neighborhood retail centers within the Downtown. The proposal is to update the language to more specifically focus on the direction given by the DIP CAC. Proposed Policy F encourages the development of short-term parking garages to support neighborhood-scale retail service if such facilities are determined to be the most appropriate approach to short-term parking problems. All other means of accommodating the short-term parking needs should be looked at before looking to the construction of parking garages.

Mr. McDonald said proposed Policy G directs exploration of opportunities to implement a parking guidance system to more efficiently utilize the Downtown parking supply. He explained that such systems generally involve real-time electronic signage that guides motorists to where there is parking available.

Policy H was proposed to support transit ridership to the Downtown by encouraging the regional transit providers to expand the park and ride system outside the Downtown.

Commissioner Bonincontri asked if consideration has been given to using commercial parking areas for park and ride lots. Mr. Liljeblad said there are some park and ride lots in the region that are leased from churches. For the most part, commercial parking supply is tight and not a candidate for increasing the permanent supply. He added that much of the growth and demand for park and ride lot capacity is outside the immediate Bellevue area in the very areas where there are supply shortages. The proposed policy is not something that is within the purview of Bellevue to implement, but it does indicate the need for the city to be supportive of the transit providers in their efforts to create additional park and ride capacity regionally.

Transportation Commission Chair Elliot added that commercial facilities must pay for their parking areas as part of their leases. As a result they guard their spaces jealously. Commercial parking is in that respect a very limited supply and not suitable to conversion to long-term parking solutions.

Mr. McDonald said proposed Policies I and J relate to enhancing the pedestrian environment in the Downtown. Policy I is focused on enhancing the mobility of pedestrians and bicyclists by improving the signals and crosswalks. Policy J aimed to improve the pedestrian experience by having street trees and other landscaping in sidewalk construction. The DIP CAC suggested that the southern boundary of the Downtown be given special consideration with regard to landscaping to provide a softer transition to the residential neighborhoods.

Policy K directs the designation and enhancement of the bicycle routes through the Downtown to create a more pleasant and safe environment for bicyclists. Policy L encourages developers and property owners in the Downtown to provide long-term bicycle parking and storage for employees and short-term bicycle parking for visitors.

Commissioner Bach asked how many Downtown employees ride bicycles to work daily. Mr.

Liljeblad said annually on Bike To Work Day the city attempts to count the cyclists at various waypoints approaching the Downtown. Efforts are made to interview some of the riders as well. The number of bicycle commuters as a percentage of the overall number of commuters is still quite small, but every little bit helps. Experience has shown that the cost of parking is the single greatest factor in increasing the number of bicycle commuters.

Mr. McDonald said proposed Policy M is focused on the proposal of the DIP CAC to create a one-way couplet using 106th Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE. As envisioned, 106th Avenue NE would be for northbound traffic, and 108th Avenue NE would be for southbound traffic. An opposite-flow lane would be provided on 108th Avenue NE to provide access to the transit center.

Mr. McDonald informed the Commission that Policy 1 and proposed Policy N are both focused on street extensions and I-405 improvements. He said Policy 1 envisions the extension of NE 2nd Street and NE 10th Street across I-405 connecting to 116th Avenue, and to I-405 and SR-520 through collector-distributor lanes. Policy N amplifies the need to provide for additional circulation opportunities across I-405.

Mr. McDonald explained that currently the code requires most large individual developments to provide a set number of parking stalls depending on the use. That may or may not be the most efficient way to provide the necessary amount of parking. Proposed Policy O would allow the city to investigate a change to the Land Use Code to allow a developer to pay a fee to the city or some other entity to be used for the construction of strategically located public parking garages within the Downtown.

Proposed Policy P represents a continued effort to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles in the Downtown by coordination with the Bellevue TMA and the transit service providers to provide transit and ridershare incentives, subsidies and promotional materials to Downtown employees and employers.

Turning to the project list, Mr. McDonald explained that in 1993 when the first Downtown Implementation Plan was put together a transportation study was done which resulted in a number of projects. He said those projects are shown on the current list in the 400 series. Some of the projects have been completed since the original project list was adopted; other projects have been eliminated because additional studies have shown the projects are no longer warranted. All of the proposed new projects were labeled on the list with the prefix "DIP".

Mr. McDonald noted that the Downtown Transportation Plan could be found starting on page 43 of the packet. He said the proposed plan is substantially different from the current plan with regard to the background text.

B. 2004 Update to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code
– Housing Element

Ms. Burgess told the Commissioners that when the Comprehensive Plan update work program was discussed with the Council there were no comments offered with regard to the Housing Element. There have been concerns raised by the public about what an increase in the diversity of housing will mean for existing neighborhoods. Accordingly, staff believes there would be some merit in involving the community more before beginning the task of updating the policies. To that end a team has been put together that includes Art Sullivan, the Manager of A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH).

Ms. Burgess provided the Commissioners with copies of the proposed schedule for updating the Housing Element, including the community outreach schedule. She suggested that a housing tour would be of great benefit, for the Commissioners and for community leaders. The Commissioners agreed and the dates discussed were February 21 or March 6.

Ms. Burgess suggested that following the housing tour there should be an open house with an energetic presentation and displays from a number of housing providers. The participants could be divided into small groups to discuss the issues and gather comments.

Commissioner Bach suggested having information displays in the three area malls, staffed or not, to get the issues out in front of the people and inviting the public to the open house. He added that it would be helpful to have a booth at the Bellevue Home Show as well.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 29, 2003

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Robertson and the motion carried unanimously.

B. November 5, 2003

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Lynde. Second was by Commissioner Bach and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Robertson abstained from voting.

C. November 19, 2003

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bach. Second was by Commissioner Bonincontri and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Lynde abstained from voting.

D. December 3, 2003

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Robertson. Second was by Commissioner Mathews and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Bach abstained from voting.

E. December 10, 2003

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Bach and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Lynde abstained from voting.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Burgess reviewed the proposed schedule with the Commissioners. She noted that there would be no meeting on January 21 as previously announced.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PUBLIC COMMENT

Transportation Commission Chair Elliot commented that the Redmond Center by Overlake offers an excellent example of transit-oriented development. He suggested that the location might be a good stop for the Commission housing tour. There are also excellent examples of transit-oriented development in Renton and Kent.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Schiring adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.